



# Allegations of ethnic cleansing by Kurdish forces in northern Syria (2015–2016)

During the [Syrian Civil War](#), the Kurdish-led [YPG](#) (later part of the [SDF](#)) seized control of Arab-majority areas like [Tal Abyad](#) from [ISIL](#) in 2015–2016. Turkish officials and Syrian opposition groups subsequently accused Kurdish forces of [ethnic cleansing](#) to alter demographics.<sup>[2]</sup>

## Allegations

### Displacement and property destruction

- **Amnesty International** documented the YPG using bulldozers to demolish Arab homes in Tal Abyad, preventing civilian returns. Witnesses reported Kurdish fighters stating, "If you come back, we'll demolish your home again."<sup>[1]</sup>
- **Al Jazeera** reported widespread Arab displacement, with villages burned or looted after YPG takeovers.<sup>[3]</sup>

### Killings

- **The Telegraph** cited Syrian opposition claims of YPG executing Arab detainees, though no mass graves or systematic killings were independently verified.<sup>[2]</sup>

## Aftermath

As of 2017, many displaced Arabs remained unable to return to villages in YPG-controlled areas due to destroyed infrastructure and security restrictions.<sup>[1]</sup>

## See also



- [Human rights violations during the Syrian Civil War](#)
- [Demographics of Rojava](#)

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Part of the [Syrian Civil War](#) and [Rojava conflict](#)



Burned home in Tel Abyad, Syria allegedly destroyed by Kurdish forces (2015)

<b>Location</b>	<a href="#">Northern Syria</a>
<b>Date</b>	2015–2016
<b>Target</b>	<a href="#">Syrian Arab</a> and <a href="#">Turkmen</a> civilians
<b>Attack type</b>	<a href="#">ethnic cleansing</a> , <a href="#">looting</a> , <a href="#">mass killing</a> , <a href="#">Execution</a> , <a href="#">Forced displacement</a> , <a href="#">home destruction</a> ,
<b>Weapons</b>	<a href="#">Firearms</a> , <a href="#">Bulldozers</a> , arson (per reports)
<b>Deaths</b>	No independently verified death toll
<b>Victims</b>	Thousands (per <a href="#">Amnesty</a> and <a href="#">Al Jazeera</a> )
<b>Perpetrators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■  <a href="#">SDF</a></li><li>■  <a href="#">YPG</a></li><li>■  <a href="#">PYD</a> (alleged political oversight, per <a href="#">Amnesty</a><sup>[1]</sup>)</li></ul>
<b>Motive</b>	<a href="#">Alleged demographic change</a>

- War crimes in the Syrian Civil War

## References

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1. 'We Had Nowhere Else to Go': Forced Displacement and Demolitions in Northern Syria (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde24/2503/2015/en/>) (Report). Amnesty International. October 2015.
  2. "Syrian Kurds accused of ethnic cleansing and killing opponents" (<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/05/18/syrian-kurds-accused-of-ethnic-cleansing-and-killing-opponents/>). *The Telegraph*. 18 May 2016.
  3. "Kurdish fighters carry out 'ethnic cleansing' in Syria" (<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/2/15/kurdish-fighters-carry-out-ethnic-cleansing-in-syria>). *Al Jazeera*. 15 February 2016.
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